

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 266 (2009)¹

The future of cultural tourism – towards a sustainable model

1. Cultural tourism is an essential counterweight to mass tourism and the drift towards the folklorisation of culture. European cities have a fundamental interest in promoting cultural exchanges and activities related to the preservation and the regeneration of their tangible and intangible heritage. These are the main components of Europe's cultural richness and diversity.

2. Cultural tourism has an important contribution to make in increasing mutual understanding and consolidating peace and promoting European values. Cultural routes can play a bridge-building role between the east, west, north and south of Europe, making tourists aware that culture can link cities, regions and people beyond borders and helping them to realise the importance of the heritage that Europeans have in common.

3. National governments and regional authorities have an interest in making cities attractive to cultural tourists by respecting and promoting their diversity and helping them to provide the necessary space and instruments for conservation and promotion of the cultural heritage and intercultural exchanges within and among cities. They should also encourage them to create networks of like-minded cities in order to pool efforts and resources.

4. At the same time, political decision makers should make sure that specific cultural identities and local distinctiveness are not only preserved but further developed at the local level in order to avoid cultural stagnation. Cities should not be museums, but living entities which respect their past while remaining open to new developments and challenges. This approach should be the object of continual evaluation by the cities themselves.

5. The promotion of cultural diversity involves the promotion of the variety and distinctiveness of historic places within their respective settings. Historic sites, as the main objects of tourist interest, have to strike a balance between the need to develop a modern environment and infrastructure and the constraints of a historic setting. Historic cities themselves bear the main responsibility for preserving their distinctiveness by identifying and singling out specific buildings and craftsmanship of a particular value for their cultural identity. There is a need for cities and regions to assess the presence of different forms of cultural expression on their territory. The variety of these different forms of art and cultural products should be preserved in the interest of local residents and tourists.

6. Governments should encourage cities and regions to define a holistic approach when developing realistic spatial planning and management systems with a view to creating vibrant and modern places without compromising their historic and local distinctiveness. A sense of place is a vital element to be developed together with residents and to be shared with visitors.

7. In the light of the above, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe,

a. believing that one of the key cultural assets of cities is the diversity and cultural heritage of their populations and that the awareness and respect of the traditions, customs and cultural diversity of the host countries should be an integral part of cultural tourism;

b. convinced of the value of the Council of Europe's White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue for promoting cultural tourism initiatives and programmes with a view to fostering awareness and respect of a wide range of forms of cultural expression;

c. recognising that cultural tourism can provide opportunities for transfrontier networking thus also allowing trans-frontier regions to increase their economic potential and enabling European citizens to discover their neighbours and to bring diversity to life;

d. convinced of the necessity to further foster a common perception of cultural diversity as a resource, to be included in the overall concept of cultural tourism;

e. convinced of the need to encourage the establishment of local creative development and management structures in order to ensure a better co-ordination between private and public service providers in the tourist sector;

f. convinced of the necessity to further promote the main principles as set out in Congress Resolution 185 (2004) on the promotion of cultural tourism as a factor of development of the regions;

8. *Recommends that the Committee of Ministers urge member states to:*

a. ensure that the host communities of historic sites are aware of the value of cultural tourism for the preservation of their heritage and the economic regeneration of their regions;

b. ensure that cities and regions are aware of the value of their cultural diversity for regenerating their regions through cultural tourism;

c. develop strategies to stimulate investment by private individuals and companies in heritage preservation by offering tax rebates for investments allowing heritage regeneration and the refurbishment of historic buildings and sites, in compliance with national and European standards for heritage preservation;

d. encourage greater participation in and responsibility for cultural heritage by local associations;

e. ensure that cultural tourism is properly managed with a view to preserving the authenticity and significance of the heritage;

f. ensure adequate training of civil servants in charge of cultural heritage management in communities and towns; they should be actively involved in tourism management procedures and be regularly informed about the main activities proposed within their cities and regions;

g. promote public interest and awareness regarding the significance of cultural heritage for cultural tourism by setting up nationwide media partnerships and programmes for balanced and informed reporting on the value of specific cultural sites;

h. invite tourist professionals to develop a broad range of tools, such as thematic publications, cultural programmes and fairs, heritage site visits and excursions, exhibitions,

workshops, lectures, seminars and television programmes to make greater use of the potential of cultural destinations;

i. encourage greater use of new technologies (ICTs) to promote new cultural tourism sites and destinations in order to improve destination management and stimulate tourist interest in lesser known destinations and sites;

j. support the preservation and enhancement of the cultural environment of historic sites and make heritage known to present and future generations – two fundamental tasks of cultural heritage management – to be conducted in close co-operation with cultural tourism professionals.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Regions on 4 March 2009 and adopted by the Congress on 5 March 2009, 3rd Sitting (see Document CPR(16)4REP, explanatory memorandum, rapporteur: G. Krug (Germany, R, SOC)).